

inscriptions from ancient monuments. Presented by W. Lockhart, Esq., F.R.C.S. Netherlands, viz.:—1st, Maps showing the Canal System (Waterstaats karte); 2nd, Catalogue of Maps published by the Institute of the Royal Engineers of the Netherlands; 3rd, Areas of the Campaigns of the Emperor Napoleon (French); 4th, Catalogue of Maps contained in the Dutch National Archives; 5th, Historical Atlas of the Netherlands from the sixteenth century. By G. Mees. Maps of the Dutch Colonies in India. The above maps by purchase. Map of Florida, U.S. By Colton.

Before commencing the ordinary business of the evening the PRESIDENT alluded to the loss the Society had sustained in the death of their honorary corresponding member Captain Maury, the distinguished American hydrographer.



The President then offered the following observations

*On Badakhshán and Wakhán.*

As the question of the frontier of Afghanistan was attracting so much public attention, it would, perhaps, be agreeable to the Fellows of the Society if he gave them such information as he himself possessed on the subject. In the meetings of the Society it had been their rule to exclude from the field of debate all political matters; but there were certain topics in which politics and geography were so completely mixed, that it was quite impossible to consider the one subject without, to some extent, introducing the other. The new frontier of Afghanistan was an instance of these mixed questions. After tracing this frontier on the map, he said it was not suddenly improvised for the occasion, nor had it been laid down exclusively on political considerations. All that had been required was to recognise the old frontier of the Afghan dominions. He felt some diffidence in discussing this subject, because he had been, to a certain extent, made personally responsible for the frontier. Whatever responsibility there was in the matter he was ready to take his share of; but the proposed line did not originate in London. It was arranged in the first place between the Governments of India and Cabul, and was merely sent to England for approval. On its arrival he was consulted on the subject, and proposed certain modifications which were sent back to Calcutta. These alterations having been approved there, the document was sent home again, and was afterwards communicated to the Russian Government, by whom also the line was approved. Politically all that the English Government cared to do was to recognise as belonging to Afghanistan the territory governed by the father of the present Ameer of Cabul. For a long period Badakhshán and Wakhán were in a state of uncertain dependency



between the Usbegs and the Afghans; but in 1859 Dost Mahommed Khan fairly overran the districts and incorporated them in his empire; and there could be no doubt that from that time they had been *boná fide* Afghan dependencies. Then the geographical question arose, as to what were the limits of this territory. The Russian Government had volunteered a declaration that Afghanistan was altogether beyond the sphere of their control and political influence, but they did not exactly know what the limits of Afghanistan were. When the first rough sketch of the frontier was brought home to England, he saw that there were certain geographical irregularities which would be somewhat difficult of adjustment. For instance, the districts of Roshán and Shignán, and the Ruby Mines, though belonging to Afghanistan, were to the north of the Oxus, while, on the other hand, a portion of Darwáz, belonging either to Khokán or Bokhára, stretched across the river to the south. One irregularity, therefore, balanced the other, and the due distribution of territory was not greatly affected by the adoption of the course of the river as the boundary between the two States. When this view of the question, however, was communicated to the Russian Government, certain political and geographical difficulties arose. In the first place, an objection was taken that the authority of Cabul over Badakhshán and Wakhán was so slight and so precarious, that it was impossible to regard those districts as integral parts of the Afghan empire. As this objection, however, turned out to be mainly founded on the fact that there was a refugee chief from Badakhshán in the Bokhára territory, who threatened reprisals, it was pointed out, in reply, that expatriation was really the normal condition of political society in that part of the world, every district in the vicinity, whether great or small, being subject to the same embarrassment. At present, for instance, Shere Ali Khan, the Ameer of Cabul, was in full possession of the government of Afghanistan; but the eldest sons of his two brothers, which brothers were previously in command of the country, were both refugees and pretenders to the throne. The eldest son of the King of Bokhára was also a refugee with the Ataligh Ghazee at Kashgar. The same condition of things appeared in the minor chieftainships. Until very recently, Karategín was a dependency of Khokan, but, within the last two years, the King of Bokhara had driven out the chief, and he was now a refugee in Khokán. In the same way the chief of Kúláb, an outlying dependency of Bokhára, was a refugee at Cabúl, and the old chief of Badakhshán was also a refugee at Hissár. Thus it was clear that, to take exception to the fixity of tenure of a government, because

there were pretenders or refugees in other countries, was altogether inadmissible. Besides this objection, arising from the insecurity of the sovereignty, Russia had, however, another ground for dissent. It was stated in the despatches that one of the reasons why the Russian Government could not acknowledge Wakhán to be a portion of Afghanistán, was that if that claim were admitted, the power of the Afghans would be extended far to the north, as Wakhán lay side by side with Karategín. Now, Wakhán was in reality removed at least 100 miles from Karategín, and the question therefore arose, How could General Kauffman have adopted such an extraordinary geographical argument? The explanation was curious, proving as it did that, up to the present day, the Russian Government had been under an hallucination with regard to the geography of the countries on their own immediate frontier. Allusion had been made in the House of Commons, a few evenings ago, to this singular geographical error, and the 'Edinburgh Review' had been referred to as the best source of information regarding it. Now, he was himself personally responsible for the statements in the 'Review,' and he had the less hesitation, therefore, in reading the following extract to the meeting, explaining the original source of confusion.

"About ten years ago, then, it was announced to the Imperial Geographical Society of St. Petersburg, by one of its most distinguished members, the late Mons. Veniukoff, that a manuscript had been discovered in the archives of the 'Etat Major,' which professed to give a minute account of all the country intervening between Cashmere and the Kirghiz Steppes. The author was said to be a German (George Ludwig von ———), an agent of the East India Company, who was despatched at the beginning of this, or the end of the last, century, to purchase horses in Central Asia, and who, having on his return from his mission, quarrelled with the Calcutta Government on the subject of his accounts, transferred his MSS. to St. Petersburg, where they had remained for over fifty years unnoticed in deposit. The chapters which Mons. Veniukoff published from this work, and which were certainly very curious, were received at St. Petersburg with the most absolute confidence, as extracts from official documents, and were cordially welcomed even in Paris; but in England they were viewed with suspicion from the commencement; and no sooner were the details brought forward than they were pronounced impossible, and the whole story of the horse-agent and his journal were accordingly declared to be an impudent fiction."

It was thus pretended that a doctor had travelled up from Cashmere to the Oxus with a guard of Sepoys, having penetrated through the mountains accompanied by camels in an incredibly short space of time. When he had reached the middle of the Pamir Steppe, it was further stated that he found horses in abundance, and had sent back 150 to Calcutta under charge of half-a-dozen Sepoys. The whole story was so absurd that it could not be believed for an instant, but at the same time some curious



geographical features were correctly described: the names of places, indeed, were apparently genuine, and even specimens of the Káfir language were accurately given, so that a great deal of mystery was admitted to attach to the story. Thereupon arose a controversy of some warmth, which was not yet finished.

The most plausible solution was somewhat to the following effect:—The great Oriental scholar Klaproth, it seemed, must have determined to mystify the world, whilst at the same time he replenished his own pockets. He took the trouble accordingly, in the first place, to invent a journey from the plains of India to the Russian frontier through a country which was at that time entirely unknown to the majority of geographers. To illustrate these travels, he compiled very elaborate maps, the sketch-route of the journey, indeed, being contained in twenty sheets, and the MSS. thus illustrated was sold to the Russian Government. Next he invented a Russian mission to the frontiers of India, also through an unknown country, and this he illustrated in a similar manner, selling the MSS. to our Foreign Office for 1000 guineas. Then, in order to confirm the accuracy of both these journeys from what might be supposed to be an independent source, he invented a Chinese itinerary, passing through the same regions and corroborating their geography. The whole three accounts were purely fictitious, but they were for a long time accepted as genuine both by the Russian and English Governments, and Mr. Arrowsmith was allowed to consult the Foreign Office manuscript in order to incorporate some of the details in the map which he constructed in 1834 for the illustration of Burnes's travels. The Russian cartographers, in the same way, followed the authority of their MS. and delineated the country accordingly, but the position of Wakhán was entirely wrong, and thus the Russians were misled. Colonel Yule had recently hit upon an explanation of the circumstances under which Klaproth's mistakes occurred, and his paper on the subject would be published in the next number of the 'Proceedings.' The explanation was something to the following effect:—A little more than a century ago, in 1759, the Chinese Government sent a grand expedition to the west. It was accompanied by three Jesuit missionaries, who were good observers, and who laid down all the positions, where they had an opportunity of taking observations, very correctly. They, however, did not proceed the whole distance with the expedition, but turned back from Yarkend; and after they had left, the Chinese officers carried on the investigations themselves. It seemed that they constructed their maps on the spot in squares representing an area of about 50 miles, and that these



squares were afterwards given to the cartographers at Peking to be incorporated into one map. Colonel Yule had obtained from Paris a photographic copy of this Chinese map as used by Klaproth, and which was in fact the foundation of Klaproth's own map of Central Asia; and he had discovered that the square containing Badakhshán and Wakhán had apparently been turned round from east and west to north and south, so that the relative positions of places were altered by  $90^{\circ}$ . This, then, explained all the mystery. The streams which Lieut. Wood found running north and south were represented in the map as running east and west; and the valley of Wakhán, which ran east and west, was in the Chinese map turned south and north. The consequence was that Wakhán, instead of being on the same parallel with Badakhshán, was placed 100 miles to the north of it, and this accordingly was the reason why the Russians referred to Wakhán as lying side by side with Karategín. The sources of information, however, at our disposal were fortunately amply sufficient to prove the falsity of the Russian geography. They were as follows:—In 1838 Lieut. Wood, of the Indian Navy, who was with Sir Alexander Burnes's party when they went to Cabul, proceeded across the Hindú Kúsh and then followed the valley of the Oxus to its source. He was the only European who in recent times had been over that exact ground, but other travellers had been in the vicinity. Mr. Hayward, for instance, travelled from Cashmere, intending to reach the same point, but he was murdered on the frontier, while Mr. Shaw, his fellow-traveller, had not only been at Kashgar, but had made extensive explorations in the mountains south of Yarkend. Lately, also, the Russians had sent an officer, Mons. Fedchenko, from Khokán across the outer range to the Alai Plain, and the culminating ridge beyond. Besides this European information, there was also an abundance of good native data. In 1857, or 1858, Abdúl Medjíd, for instance, was sent from India to Khokán by way of Badakhshán and the Pamír Steppe, and he returned through Karategín, Darwáz, and Kuláb. His itinerary had been laid down with the greatest care, and was the best information at present obtainable with regard to the topography of the Pamír. He was indeed the only person who had laid down the two lines of route from Badakhshán to Khokán. Unfortunately his return route had been accidentally omitted from the list of trade-routes published in Davies's reports, although it was contained in the original report in the India Office. Another native officer, named Pundit Munphool, lived for two or three years in Badakhshán, and had given a very excellent account of the country. When

Mr. Forsyth went to Yarkand he sent an agent, Faiz Bukhsh by name, through the country to Badakhshán, and thence up the valley to meet his master at Yarkand, while another, Ibrahim Khan, was sent across the hills on the same line as that taken by Hayward. Major Montgomerie's Mirza and Havildar were both also in Badakhshán, and the list of native travellers was completed by Mahommed Ameen, who had collected a vast number of routes in every direction between India and Turkestan. From all these sources, then, a sufficiently accurate knowledge of the country had been gained. There was only one portion, indeed, still unknown—the great bend of the river below the ruby mines, along which no traveller had yet passed. From the Sea of Aral, for about 1000 miles upwards, the course of the Oxus was through a low country. At Kúndúz the height indeed was barely 1000 feet above the sea; but from that point the ground rose rapidly. Wood's road-book gave the elevations as follows: Kúndúz, 900 feet; Faizabád, 3600 feet; Yowl, 6800 feet; Ishkishem, 8700 feet; Langar Kísh, 10,800 feet; Lake Victoria, 15,600 feet: so that from Kúndúz to the Lake, a distance in a straight line of little more than 300 miles, the rise was very nearly 15,000 feet. Such a difference of elevation must, of course, give the stream a tremendous impetus, and accordingly, at Ishkishem, where it met a shoulder from the great Hindú Kúsh, and was deflected northward, it was a perfect torrent. It then flowed north and north-west till it turned the mountain, the whole of its course along this track being bordered by tremendous precipices. Baron Meyendorf, the Russian Ambassador to Bokhara fifty years ago, gave a very good description of this inaccessible region of Darwaz. Apprehensions were sometimes expressed that if the line of the Oxus were adopted as the Afghan limit, it might be regarded as an invitation to the Russian Government to push on from Samarkand to the river; but the chiefships in this quarter had been independent from all time, no race of conquerors having ever been able to subdue them. Strabo, for instance, informed us that the Greeks could only extend their domination as far as the Fani, whose name was probably preserved in the Fán-táú, the Fán Lake, and even in Pamír or Fán-mír. The Kaliphs, again, were only able to reach as far as Rasht. He therefore saw no probability of Russia ever coming down and occupying Darwáz, Roshán, and Shignán: at any rate such conquests could never be of advantage to any power, for the districts contained nothing worth having. They were very sparsely populated; and the population, such as it was, was the wildest and most untameable in that part of the world. The country, moreover, was impassable for wheeled



carriages, and in many places even for horses. One Englishman, Colonel Gardiner, who was still living in Cashmere, was believed to have been through Darwáz, but he had given no sufficient account of the district. Badakhshán was one of the most delightful countries in all the East. The climate was beautiful, the pastures most delicious, and it was so healthy that invalids from all quarters visited it for the sake of change of air. It possessed valuable mines, not only of precious stones, such as the lapis-lazuli and the ruby, but also of various metals, and there were gold washings in the river. The Balass ruby was simply the ruby of Badakhshán,—the word Balass being a corruption of Badakhsh. The English Government had been taunted with giving up the famous ruby mines to the north of the Oxus, but in reality those mines had not been worked for fifty years. The country around them was perfectly desolate and uninhabited, and he believed no more rubies were to be found there. The lapis-lazuli mines, on the contrary, were really valuable, and were in the heart of the country. On the south, Badakhshán was bounded by a high range of mountains, through which there were only a few passes, and those very difficult and quite impassable to an army. More to the eastward, however, at the end of the Chitrál Valley, there was a very easy and excellent pass, called the Biroghil Pass. As the range gradually merged into the Pamír the rocky crests disappeared, and the country opened out into a high tableland, just as in Thibet. The ascent and descent were very gradual, and if there was a gate to India, it was there; for in reality the Biroghil was the only pass, in the whole of the range from Herat to the eastern limit of Thibet, at all adapted to the passage of an army. In estimating the danger of the Russian advance towards India, he did not think that sufficient consideration was generally given to the exceedingly difficult and anomalous position which Russia occupied in those regions at present. It was the first experiment she had ever made in governing an exclusively Mohammedan country—assuredly one of the most difficult things in statesmanship. England had only once made such an experiment, in the case of the occupation of Afghanistan, and had learned the excessive difficulty of carrying it out successfully. France, too, had been endeavouring to amalgamate Algeria with the French Empire for forty years; but the Arabs were as ready to rise now as in the first year of their subjection. The Trans-Caucasian provinces of Russia were sometimes referred to as a case in point, but there a large Christian element balanced the Mohammedan element. He believed that Russia was only just beginning to appreciate the extraordinary difficulty of governing an exclusively Mohammedan

country—and especially a fanatical country—such as Turkistan, south of the Great Steppes. It might not be impossible to achieve success, but the end could only be gained at a great expense and at a great sacrifice of life. At the present day, Russia expended half a million sterling in excess of all proceeds, in order to keep her position in Tashkand and Samarkand. If she occupied and retained Khiva, she must certainly spend another half-million; and a drain of 1,000,000*l.* sterling, annually, would be a serious consideration for a poor country like Russia. She would most probably find it more advantageous to withdraw after taking security for the future good conduct of the Khan. At any rate, she could get no return from the country, and her only object therefore in retaining occupation would seem to be to increase her moral leverage in Europe. We might safely leave such questions to the consideration of the Government; he would only say that he regarded the recognition of a fixed frontier for Afghanistan as an element of tranquillity and security. There certainly was no occasion for Russia to approach any nearer than she was at present; and there could be no doubt that the Government of Cabul would attend to the advice of the English Government, so far as to keep clearly and strictly within her own limits. There was no inducement, indeed, for Cabul to transgress the limits, or to cross the Oxus to the north, nor was there any inducement for Russia to extend her possessions to the south. He had not in this address gone into the subject of Russian progress on the east coast of the Caspian; but he regarded that as a far more important matter than the dispute about Badakhshán and Wakhán, and he hoped to express his views upon it on the 24th March.

Mr. SHAW said he was probably the only living Englishman who had ever met with natives of Wakhan, and their definition of that country agreed with that given by Sir Henry Rawlinson. There was a colony of Wakhans in the territory of Yarkand, where they had been settled for the last forty or fifty years. He had also heard similar accounts of the country from travellers who crossed from Yarkand yearly.

Lord LAWRENCE said it was entirely out of the question that Russia should ever be so insane as to attempt a movement on India from the country which Sir Henry Rawlinson had described. He was quite convinced, from what he had heard from the Afghans themselves, and from the late Amir Dost Mahommed and his sons and grandsons, that the action recently taken by England would be thoroughly appreciated by the Afghans. They had their fears of some day or other being invaded from Central Asia, and therefore they would recognise the value of the steps taken by the British Government with regard to their frontier. If there was any portion of Badakhshan or Wakhan, on the north side of the river, he believed it was not worth having, and that the Amir himself would say as much, and be too grateful for what England had done, to raise any objections. Every other consideration was perfectly insignificant, compared with that of having a strong and suitable boundary. It had been stated in some quarters that, by the arrangements recently made with Russia



great complications would arise in those parts of Asia; that the Afghans encouraged by British support, would make incursions across the Oxus and thereby incite retaliation; but the Afghans had no inducement to cross the river. If they should be so rash as to do anything of the kind, they would only bring down on themselves the very dangers they were anxious to avoid. Moreover, while England was prepared to give them assistance, such as our interests might justify, we were not bound by treaty to do anything for them; and this circumstance would be the strongest possible inducement for them not to get into trouble. We had given them assistance on various occasions, and had given them subsidies, and shown that we wished to efface the memory of the old days when we invaded their country; and the policy which had been pursued would go far to conciliate the Afghans, and show them that their interests and our interests were to a very considerable extent identical.

Mr. DANBY SEYMOUR wished to know if the Russians had, by the recent arrangements, obtained permission to advance as far as the Oxus. He had understood that there was to be an intermediate neutral land, and he considered such an arrangement would have been the best that could have been made.

Mr. SAUNDERS said, as the basin of the Upper Oxus was traversed by a continental trade-route, it was most important that Russia should not be allowed to take possession of it, and bar the passage of the maritime trade with the Black Sea, the Levant, and the Persian Gulf, by means of a prohibitive tariff. She would be most likely to do so with the parallel route by way of the Jaxartes, and the closing of the Jaxartes route would render the retention of the Oxus for free-trade all the more necessary. He alluded to the defective state of European information respecting the highlands drained by the Oxus, and to the difference of opinion expressed on that subject, and recommended further exploration.

Dr. BALL said it was not wise to attempt to make arrangements with any great Power which we should object to ourselves. A neutral land merely meant a permanent nest of robbers, and would prove in the end a most unsatisfactory arrangement.

The PRESIDENT said there never had been any invitation to Russia to advance to the Oxus, neither had there been any definite arrangement for a neutral zone. The only question that they had had to consider was, what were the boundaries of Afghanistan? It was an essential element, however, of consideration with the Afghan authorities that the trade-route between Eastern and Western Asia should not be closed, and he trusted it would always continue an open road for the commerce of all nations, free from anything like a prohibitive tariff.

